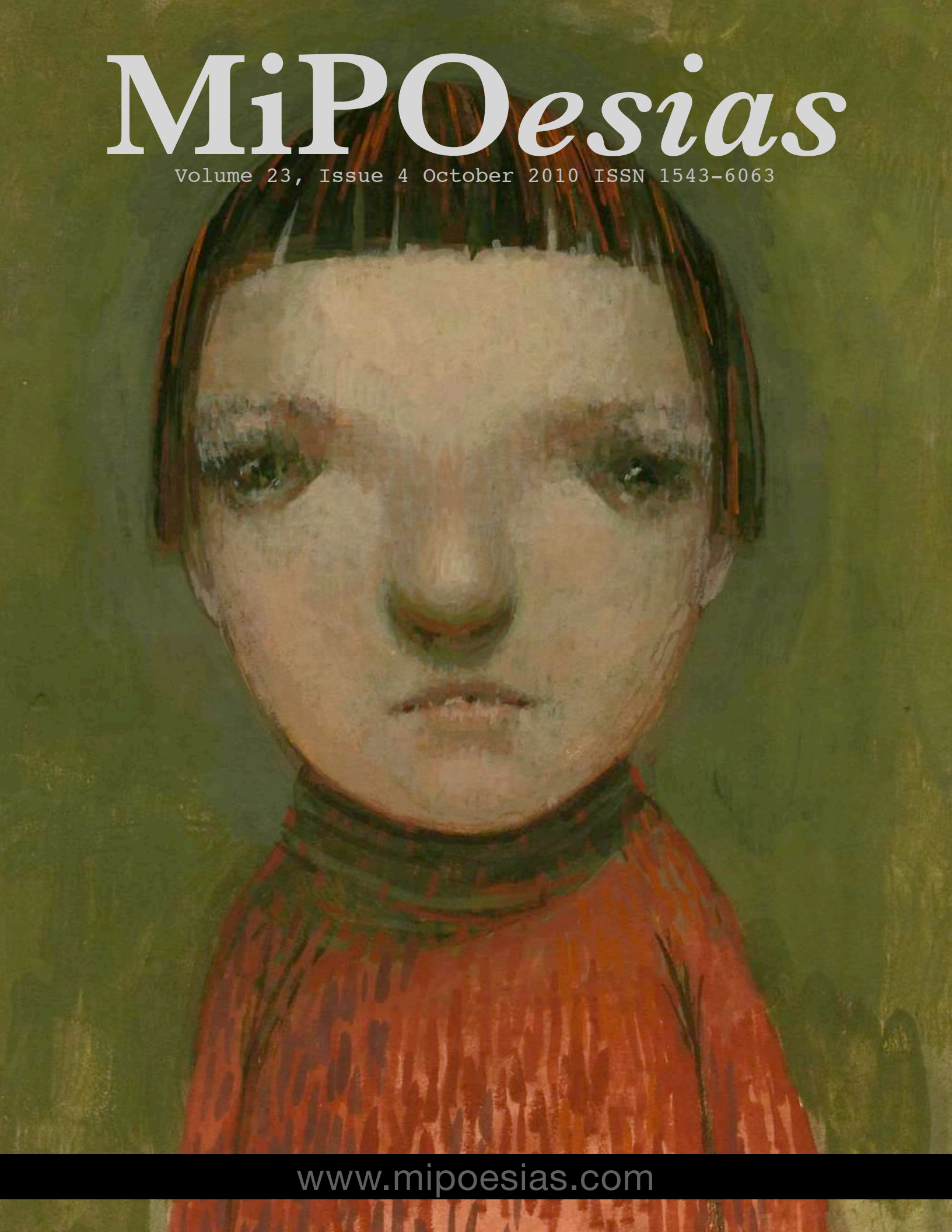
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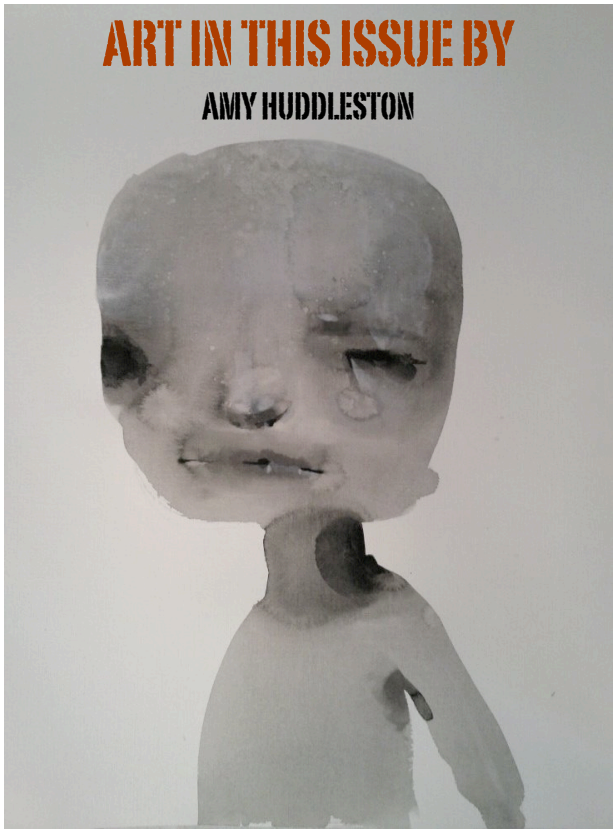
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Amy Huddleston began drawing as a child; gridding and drawing portraits of musicians and faces from 18th century paintings. In college she met William Cumming, who's color, and Nabis inspired philosophy of painting profoundly effected her. Her prior, almost opposing interest in formalism and portraiture took a back seat for nearly a decade until, illustration, pop surrealism, and portraiture drew Huddleston back toward drawing and form. Mid 1990's, she began her portraits. She continues to develop each area of interest.

Huddleston lives and works in Kenmore, WA with her husband and children.

Visit Huddleston Studio
http://amyhuddleston.com

Grace Cavalieri

Recurrence

I guess I never knew what 'The Raven' really meant
but who can forget the first time, reading Poe,
maybe ten years old, chanting nevermore nevermore.
We knew it was a message about thoughts,
the rich tormented mind the writer has, a muse
never leaving her alone, or free.
What did I know then about the carryings of birds,
their droppings…shame, brief happiness.
What I'm left with after all this time is possession
in the murmuring of constant sound,
the rustling we wake to hear, the endless flight,
disturbance and its claw of restlessness.
Beneath it all – the wingspan of the dreadful
caw – obsession. This blessing
is what the raven brought – the inability to forget.
It's what the raven brings us still. He'll
never fly. Why would we trade our souls for sky.

Grace Cavalieri is a contributor to *Poets and Artists* (O&S,) America's most beautiful magazine. She launches her 34th consecutive year on public radio with "The Poet and the Poem" in January, 2011. Her new play is ANNA NICOLE: BLONDE AMBITION.

Scot Siegel

Reasons I Resisted Kissing Your Sister

Do you remember the Playboys we cached in the hollowed-out
eucalyptus? I never found them again. How about those nights
we spent cat-fishing at the quarry below Payless. When that monster
locked its jaws on your wrist and began to swim, I thought of
Elizabeth then.

And do you remember getting lost in a storm sewer, the roar
of Oakland Avenue above our heads; then the pinpoint of light
through the welded shut catch basin: I was tempted
to kiss her then.

But later that summer, at camp without you, I walked with a girl
from the east high on a desert trail, our hands clasped beside
the Tawanamas, mountains bristling before a storm: For a moment,

I thought of you and your mother back in the city; I was hoping
you were sober; I almost thought of your sister, but the girl's fist,
warm in my palm, juniper smoke in her green eyes, and the blue
sky turning purple in the distance…

Do you remember the grassfire we set on the hill above your
house? That was the last time you told me your sister wanted
to kiss me. But her chest was flat as the valley, and her face
freckled and pale as the oat grass. She looked like you, brother,
and I thought you knew better.

Siegel is author of three volumes of poetry, Skeleton Says (Finishing Line Press, 2010), Untitled Country (Pudding House Publications, 2009), and Some Weather (Plain View Press, 2008). Poetry Northwest, Oregon State Library, Nimrod, Aesthetica Magazine (UK), and the Oregon State Poetry Association have honored Siegel with awards and commendations for his writing. Siegel's second full-length collection is due out from Salmon Poetry in 2012.

Scot Siegel

A Little Sweetness at Café Marzocca

The barista's going on about a little girl
with red curls and hundred-dollar jeans
who reaches into the tip jar

The barista sees her, and it's a standoff,
a seesaw staring match in the middle
of the midday rush

The barista wants to tell her mother,
but the sun slants through the blinds
and she's lost in a dream,

recounting her own childhood—
The toy she wanted badly, but didn't get;
the gift that went to her sister—

Then her mother enters and they face
one another, and the girl has the gall
to ask for a piece of candy!

And she's so charming, flashing two
one-dollar bills, like revolvers,
in the barista's face—

And you can see the anguish
in the young woman's eyes, dark eyes
that say, I'm doing my best here, but she's killing me!

The barista wants nothing more
than to see the bad girl squirm;
she wants her mother to dress her down

She wants to teach her a lesson,
one she'll never forget; the one she'll spend
the rest of her life reliving.

the first time

the first time she stuck it in my mouth

i thought i had swallowed a spinner, and struggled
like a trout, tongue-tied by her treble hook;

before i could look, my neck went limp, and moth-
like stars, slow and blotchy, began to swarm;

toy soldiers melted in the trees; black bees
bloomed from the clapboards…

then she released me and it was like
emerging from a vernal hot spring

in winter, delightful…

this is how we made love before we knew how,
before we knew any better

pecking order

two daughters proffer watercolors on upturned palms:

firstborn:
a precise portrait, a chestnut
horse head in profile;

the younger one,
a cupie doll, a desert knoll
silhouette against cobalt sky;

i make the mistake of eying
hers a little too long;
i can't help suffocating on
why

why, do i like yours more?

Scot Siegel

Wandering the Desert

Put on bra. Open door
for pizza guy. Sign receipt.
Close door. Take off bra.
- Kristin Isgett ("Dateless Saturday Night")

He awoke in a dry riverbed
with a mouthful of silt,
a blue marker in his hand

He rose with the men
in yellow hardhats,
with D-9 cats

They burn slash and burl
by day, turn the dawn
sky LA-orange…

He's a good worker,
they trust him with wood
stakes, pink ribbons

His transects are faultless,
they call him
a wizard

But at dusk, when the others
turn away, he leans over
like a cripple

and takes a long, hard drag
on that blue marker,
just missing her

Lil O Will Never Be A B-Boy

Oscar Bermeo

For one, he can't keep his kicks clean.
Feels like every time he walks outside
he gets his shell toes all dogged up.

How do the other b-boys do it?
Walk through the City like angels
Smurf dancin' through the clouds?

Lil O tell ya all 'bout the Smurf Dance:
Describe every knee bend, ankle slide,
calf push. How you imagine the street
bends to your every step, bounces you
back to start position and your arms
mirror the whole pantomime in time.

Lil O can tell the story of the dance,
he just can't live the tale for himself.
Even at thirteen, he knows you can't
detail the experience—you gotta
do the thing when the time hits.
If you got enough time to talk,
then you're not doing it right.

Doesn't mean it won't ever happen.
As Lil O takes a toothbrush
to the soles of his Adidas,
bleaches white the shoelaces.

Cuz ya never know when body
memory takes over the list
of instructions in your head
and every step must be clean.

Interrogation

After the poem "One Question, Several Answers" by Claire Kageyama–Ramakrishnan

Where do you live?
In the Projects of the Bronx.

Where do you live?
In the middle of a social experiment.

Where do you live?
The same four walls
As everyone else.

Where do you live?
Far from where my parents came from.

Where do you live?
The same four walls
I keep running into.

Where do you live?
The same place I will die.

Where do you live?
In the back of the line.
In the front of the lineup.

Where do you live?
In my mother's absence.
In my father's shadow.
In my sister's footsteps.

Where do you live?
A place you don't want to visit.

Born in Ecuador and raised in the Bronx, Oscar Bermeo is the author of four poetry chapbooks, most recently *To the Break of Dawn*. He is a BRIO (Bronx Recognizes Its Own), CantoMundo, IWL (Intergenerational Writers Lab) and VONA (Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation) writing fellow. Oscar makes his home in Oakland, with his wife, poeta Barbara Jane Reyes, where he is co-editor of *Doveglion Press*.

www.oscarbermeo.com

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Kimberly Alidio

Instructions on travel in the new empire

I.
Be bright, white and clean
Repeat for the echo
Fan, flag, five, four

Calm your horse
When on the mountain you meet
A naked native girl

Ice cream soda — without accent
Since you asked
Record this fairy tale

Slip it between statistics
A dark girlchild reflection
Come home from St. Louis

Who knows bright, white and clean
Go native just enough to see her
Your job is done

II.
Go to the nearest Y, foreign club, church of world citizenship
Nod at lectured good intention
Swallow consonants, mumble fervor

Arise an oracle of co-operation
Share a dream of the native barrio
Dustmoted heat swirling around the children

Learning about the presidents on the walls
Eyeglass recognition, photographs festooned
There he mildews; here he looks at home

Washington-blink-Rizal.
Rizal-blink-Washington
Oriental indirectness comes in handy

In the Midwest, the middle of nowhere
Nothing's too far away
The church circle, the farmstead, the town hall

The soda jerk, the factory, the other side of the tracks
The bawdy house, hoboville
Everybody's a neighbor

The price of hemp is below normal.
Copra pays nothing
Sugar, cigars, and rice are worth dirt

It's not enough to slide by on innocent looks
You are rotting on the shelf or ripening
Enter their homes, eat at their tables

Answer their questions.
Keep a distance from the daughters
Pick out the best that is in them

Feed on their ideals dogged on the spit

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koreans eat weird food too

From the pig-blood stew
the part near the chicken's esophagus
that detaches pebbles from nutrients was an everlasting chew
Slurping cartilage from oxtail bones
I sing the praise of innards and tripe

Smoking another bidi she says offhand
she'd found her appetite
The proportions on each spoon must be just right
She owns up to anorexia
calling it "self-care."
I confess to secret overeating late at night

The Castro has us sharing a little lemon custard and a bottle of pear cider
In the Mission, we sit at heavily-sauced plates.
She gives me giblets
I count six skewers sticky with fried banana juice and spit
In her flat belly, my knuckles twist palm-skyward to the right
Her core sucks at my babyfat fist

Down 18th Street, we conclude that food
prepared by a beloved
is poignant and powerful stuff. She says
a friend of a friend rose from
a dinner party of twelve to exclaim,
Let's all fuck! Up Valencia,
I recall an old uncle wanting bowl after bowl
of steaming white rice
We keep up our unladylike hunger,
step for step, bite for bite

Kimberly Alidio

Kimberly Alidio is a poet, teacher and historian who works in academic critical ethnic studies to think about colonialism, memory, imagination, and freedom. Her poetry has appeared in make/shift magazine, Mythium Journal, and {M}aganda Magazine. She is an alumna of the 2010 VONA-Voices Writing Workshop . She has a doctoral degree in history from the University of Michigan, and is revising a monograph with the University of Chicago Press entitled Colonial Cosmopolitanism: Filipino Identity and American Empire, 1898-1946.

How I Became Femme

Her wide foot's red moons arose in me lust
Bare feet on shag rug, Tita stood over our mayhem

The half-mannered, strange kids left to her trust
Our parents who cares what becomes of them

Left us identical bowl cuts, eyes the color of rust
Staring at her flowered housecoat's hem

I heard her above me shake her loose long hair and cuss
In all eighty dialects Tita had us condemned

For hair-pulling, slapping and rolling in dust
Of all my instant cousins, a mystery is what I am

A stained sole or a secret smile
I stepped on Tita's toes right after she painted them

I messed up her pedi and then became femme



DECATUR

Miranda Merklein

Goodbye gulf
oil spill, tornado alarms
and hurricanes, the fear of being
blown apart at any second.
Derricks sip from the grass.

Bayou Catfish or Jose's

Mexican Food and Cantina?
Cows are thicker
in Texas, too,
but we will not dwell.

Egrets team ahead
of the storm in groups of five,
yet people are solitary.
As we westernize,
and marsh tree lines

dissipate to pine, juniper
pocks the desert hills,
remember, every orange
barrel is weighted
down with sand.

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Miranda Merklein lives and works in Santa Fe, NM, where she also publishes *Journal of Truth and Consequence*, a magazine for the arts. Her work has appeared in *Oxford American Magazine, Spoon River Poetry Review, Iron Horse Literary Review,* and others. She has a PhD in English from University of Southern Mississippi and an MA in Liberal Arts from St. John's College.

ORIGIN

I commend the bird who,
having the fortitude to bear the first feather,
causes the paleontologist to curl around
his question by the fire, who does not listen
to the critics or pond
when they burp and bicker,
and if the turkey is our common ancestor,
the dinosaurs stretch and rise
after a long, frozen winter
to herald the small-brained ocean,
a yellow butterfly must
follow the cracks,
this fossil caste,
on the first
warm day, fly!

NEEDLEFISH

The waves spread like bed sheets over the bay.
We were pilgrims then, staked our prize

with a flagpole in the sand
that blew over in the breeze,

and I woke to find the beach
rearranged its shoreline.

Yes, that's the problem
with wild beaches, you said.

You combed the grit from my hair,
and I taped your ribbon words to my waist.

The waves spread, I plunged in,
swam past Antarctic sinkholes

hiding deep in tropical swells.
Only fire coral survived your reef, not my skin,

but I didn't listen.
The waves spread and, barely visible I became

an iridescence of self,
scattering in a thousand new directions.

Was That a Kiss, Chandelier?

Donavon Davidson

Light is too awkward
a word for what happened.

That they thought darkness
is too embarrassing
for a girl lifting
a blue dress.

Both were present
at all times.

He believed she
a lighthouse
with every perfume
a terrible awakening

coming and going.

It was different
from what he thought
was night –

the dew felt red.

She believed he
a chandelier
with every corner
a softness she couldn't see

fading in and
out.

It was confusing
under those stars
she never held –

the sun rose
at all times,

even after the flying
felt cold.

The Night the Snow Banks Called to My House

I was afraid a thief would not come
and I would have nothing to say.

How would I know what was missing?

All I could hear was the stutter
of my house –
pictures, plates, plants

while the five voices of my heart
were frozen in distant snows.

I began to count the bodies
of everything green
that stopped trying,
that stopped speaking.

I wanted to hear from the man
who jumped from his roof
into what he thought was sleep
and broke every bone in his weight,
but there is no wind these days.

Maybe I could make it too, I thought.
Maybe, each heart has a flight
because no one ever says anything
in time.

I know how hidden God must feel
out there on the edge
of something dangerous.

If you forget to fall
no one will blame you.

The snow banks leave a scar
upon each night
where someone left
with what you are missing.

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Donavon holds an MFA from Goddard College, and his poetry has been published in *Quay: A Journal of the Arts, SNreview*, *Holly Rose Review, Evergreen Review*, *Barnwood International Poetry Magazine, Stirring: A Literary Collection,* and *WordRiot (*forthcoming). He currently lives in Vermont where he is an adjunct professor at the Community College of Vermont.



Jason Ryberg is the author of seven books of poetry, six screenplays, a few short stories, a box of loose papers that could one day be loosely construed as a novel and a couple of angry letters to various magazine and newspaper editors. He lives in Kansas City, Missouri. His latest collection of poems, *Blunt Trauma* (co-authored with Iris Appelquist and released by Spartan Press), is available at prosperosbookstore.com.

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20 MILES TO STURGEON BAY, SEPT. 10, 2001 (OR, I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO USE THE LINE, "IT WAS A DARK AND STORMY NIGHT...")

and there I was
wrestling a five ton truck
with a fifteen foot trailer
(and both packed tight,
top to back) down a twisting
two-lane back road (no shoulder,
no signs, no cell-phone service
for miles) way up there on
the coast of that skinny Wisconsin
peninsula that pokes so broken
pinky-like out into the black and
nebulous gloom of Lake Michigan.
But at least it was relatively
warm and dry inside the cab
though my partner and I
were still a bit shaken and chilled
to the marrow of our respective
labor-bruised bones by the over-all
unnerving (if not full-on traumatizing)
work conditions we were then currently
enduring- as in the absolutely
merciless and insane Hollywood-style
thunder and lightning and rain (with the
occasional visitation of hail, now
and again) and damn-near zero
visibility beyond the headlight's
pale and watery glow on the treacherous,
hairpin curvature of the road ahead
and of course the odd moment of
HOLY CRAP WE'RE GONNA DIE!
But hey, at least we've got half a tank of gas,
half a bag of giant pretzel sticks,
a couple cans of some psychotic
energy drink rolling around, somewhere,
and ZZ Top's "Cheap Sunglasses"
is just now coming on the radio
and the sign by the side of the road
says: "20 Miles to Sturgeon Bay"
and it looks like we just might
make last call with
time to spare.

POTATOES

They are miners under-

ground, listening for the canary,

to sing forgetfulness

lifting worries like coal dust

for if there is no song,

there is no air, like a pickax

in mid-stride, a early warning device

before the tumbling

out of the dark root cellar

like curses, like men caught

with another man's wife,

tumbling with potato eyes

blinking in the accusing sun

for that song is a light in a tunnel,

as long as it is yellow as the bird



Martin Willitts Jr has four new chapbooks: *The Girl Who Sang Forth Horses* (Pudding House Publications, 2010), *True Simplicity* (Poets Wear Prada Press, 2010), *Van Gogh's Sunflowers for Cezanne* (Finishing Line Press, 2010), and "Art Is Always an Impression of What an Artist Sees" (Muse Café, 2010).

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Gregory Sherl is the author of THE OREGON TRAIL IS THE OREGON TRAIL (Mud Luscious Press, 2012) and SWALLOW (Mud Luscious Press, 2013). His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *New York Quarterly, Gargoyle, Georgetown Review, Sixth Finch*, and *PANK*.

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Fiction



This is what you tell me: you're writing a book
about forever. My children are in the pages, their
children's children. The dog that got hit by the car
but still got three good feet is somewhere in there.
The cat from the comic strip, too. He eats some
spaghetti on page 74, tells me I'm looking
a bit husky on page 86, & can he have that last
meatball? By page 311, my children's children
are in college, smoking pot from an apple, forgetting
to brush their teeth. I'm alone the most when I close
the book. Keep it open you tell me. On page 94
I think about all that mercury in salmon. At Winn-
Dixie I promise a package of fish sticks that I'll never
visit a fish farm. Page 299, there I am walking around my
neighborhood, my sideburns graying, my irises the shade
of a used Q-tip. How old am I? There are 437 pages
but I'm too scared to look at the last dozen or so—
can you wake up one morning & forget how she tasted?
20 pages after I sprain my ankle from falling off a ladder
while putting up Christmas lights over the garage, my
daughter gets her braces off, says We can eat the bones
together. I'm putting bbq sauce on ribs, I'm wearing
an apron that says I'm wearing an apron. From pages
270-281, my children's children bring me lost treasures
they find down by the lake. A tadpole with legs. Two rocks
that feel like flesh. If this were a movie I'd wake up
& realize how I wasted my life in an empty apartment,
how fiction is the quietest way to die. Find me you'd say.
There are too many hours to not be touching. On page
403 I only want to play chess in the park. I have a cane
but I don't like to you use it. Carry me I say to an idea
I once read. You're there, I think, writing this down.

www.gregorysherl.com

Melissa McEwen

JULY

The day Uncle Uncle left for good, Aunt Rosalee was sitting on the sofa resting her eyes, trying to cool off, holding their baby on her lap like he was a whole watermelon. I was on the floor by Aunt Rosalee's knee, tickling the baby. Cousin Honey was in the basement getting her clothes from the dryer. She moved out but still comes by the house to wash. I was sent here to stay with Aunt Rosalee after Cousin Honey left because there was no one to keep an eye on Uncle Uncle when Aunt Rosalee was at work. Uncle Uncle never had a job and when Aunt Rosalee would leave for work, especially during the summer months, Uncle Uncle would go visit one of his girlfriends or bring one of his girlfriends to the house. Aunt Rosalee even threatened to quit her job so she could keep an eye on him. But now I keep (well kept) an eye on him and I had both my eyes on him the day he left for good.

I was the only one that saw Uncle Uncle leave. He tried to sneak out the kitchen door, but I looked up just in time from playing with the baby on Aunt Rosalee's lap. I knew he was sneaking because he was tiptoeing and he was definitely leaving for a while because he had a luggage. When I looked up Uncle Uncle hushed me with his index finger up to his lips and backed out the door. I don't know why I didn't say anything, maybe because I was tired of keeping an eye on him or maybe I was glad he was getting away; Aunt Rosalee isn't an easy woman to live with. I thought Aunt Rosalee would wake up and catch him as if on cue because this isn't the first time Uncle Uncle has left her. He always leaves in summer —just like how July weather makes Aunt Rosalee's hip hurt, July weather makes Uncle Uncle wander. Every July he goes and finds a new woman and it lasts as long as summer. But this new woman must be something because it's October and Uncle Uncle still hasn't come back.

And the men in the neighborhood that used to hang out with him come by and ask, "What happened to Uncle?" They are not his nephews; everybody calls him Uncle. He's been called Uncle ever since he was a boy. When he was five his grandfather told him he already looked like somebody's uncle and everybody's been calling him Uncle ever since.

"What happened to Uncle?" They ask all the time.

"I don't know," I say because I really don't know. They know as much as I do: Uncle Uncle left in July, like he usually does, but this time he never came back. And now I stay with Aunt Rosalee, not to keep an eye on Uncle Uncle, but to keep her company and to help with the baby since Cousin Honey only comes by when she has to wash. She'll call to check up on Aunt Rosalee and the baby, but she's not worried about Uncle Uncle because, as she says, "He's none-a my father," even though she calls him Papa Uncle.

On the day Uncle Uncle left for good, Aunt Rosalee woke up from resting her eyes and called for him.

"Uncle," she hollered. She never calls him by his real name which is Pete. When she met him he introduced himself as Uncle. I didn't learn his real name until someone important called and asked for Pete. I told him he had the wrong number. And when Aunt Rosalee asked me who was on the phone I told her they asked for a Pete and she laughed and said, "Pete's your uncle's name."

"Uncle," she hollered again, getting up from the sofa and handing me the baby. "Did he go somewhere? Did you see him leave?"

"No," I lied.

"I didn't hear him come down the stairs," Aunt Rosalee said rushing up the steps.

"Maybe he climbed out the window," I said, but she didn't hear me.

When Aunt Rosalee came back downstairs she glanced at the calendar and she knew and she sighed and I knew in her mind she blamed July. But it's no longer July; it's October now and Uncle Uncle is nowhere to be found.

JULY by Melissa McEwen

Before Uncle Uncle left, I remember hearing Aunt Rosalee pray on her knees in her bedroom, in the kitchen, in the bathroom, and in the hallway, and if her prayers had come true, there'd be no more summers, just long dark winters. I heard her on the kitchen phone once, too, blaming July for Uncle Uncle's cheating ways. I was eavesdropping. I pretended to be focused on swatting a fly that was on top of the stove. I had the flyswatter in my hand and would slap at the fly, missing on purpose, all the while listening to Aunt Rosalee talk on the phone to I-don't-know-who about how in winter Uncle Uncle isn't thinking about cheating because the girls are dressed in big coats, thick sweaters, with hats pulled way down over their eyes, so he doesn't even turn to look at them and about how most of the time he is inside the house during winter because he hates the cold since he's from the south. I didn't get to hear the rest because Aunt Rosalee stopped talking and looked at me with a scowl when I overdid it and smacked the flyswatter so hard against the stove that a pot fell to the floor. She said, "You ain't get that fly yet? You keeping up too much noise," and shooed me up the stairs. I tried to press my ear to the floor and listen from there, but I couldn't hear a thing.

I felt sorry for Aunt Rosalee when she got it into her head that Uncle Uncle might be hurt or dead. That night, she kept crying and praying that he was alright. The next morning she called his mother Flora who lives down south and asked if she had heard from him, but his mother only said, "Nawl." Aunt Rosalee even made Cousin Honey call. She told Cousin Honey what to say and Cousin Honey did it for $20. She said, "Grandma Flora, if you speak to Papa Uncle tell him I miss him and to come home soon," but that didn't help because that was at the end of September and Uncle Uncle still hasn't come home. Cousin Honey said she believes Uncle Uncle is down south with his mama living with a new woman because she said she could've sworn she heard him in the background telling his mother to hang up the phone and she heard another woman say, "Is that Rosalee? Let me speak to her. I'll tell her to stop calling here." But Aunt Rosalee refuses to believe it and I don't know what to believe. Maybe Uncle Uncle is close by and Indian Summer has got him confused (it's October and 80 degrees). Or maybe he did go down south with his new woman to live with his mother and he will never come back because down there it feels like July all year round.

Melissa McEwen, author of Saturday Pie and the poetry editor for *Poets/Artists*, has had poems published in *Rattle*, *Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*, *MiPOesias*, *Ocho*, and other fine literary journals. She writes short stories when on hiatus from writing poetry.

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Melissa Eleftherion

My Mother Would Be a Pigeon

(after Duncan)

My mother would be a pigeon and suck milk from my wrist
One white arc from wrist to mouth
 frozen
 suspended

A placating potion placed
<licks lips>
Between teeth and fed she would
Claws drawn

<it was the birth>
The alley was a prowl
She searched curb litter for gold

My mother would be a pigeon and stain windshields her grace
Forlorn in purple bloom her majestic sadness
Detritus
A divination of cowrie shells like marbles 'cross asphalt

My mother would be a pigeon and raise one leg in the air to prepare to fight
 and would cluck back
<old men in wide-brimmed hats would throw bread and laugh>

To prepare to fly spread wingspan she would cluck beak and ascend with claws pink and black back to where the earth dips her wings in tar and slaps her body blue and slack

"I'm fine" she would cluck back
 <where are the breadcrumbs>
and stroke belly
Cluck beak and scrape pride gently away

Melissa Eleftherion grew up in Brooklyn. Her work has appeared in *The Paterson Literary Review, Big Scream, Defenestration, Inch, TRY*, *Ur Vox*, *Letterbox Magazine* and *580 Split,* as well as online in *Womb*, *the press gang, There, and Cricket Online Review*. She received her MFA from Mills College, and is currently pursuing a second degree in Library Science. She shares a home in Berkeley with her husband, her three-year old son, and a couple of chickens.



Footnotes to a History of Dress

1. The locket which held her beloved's tangled hair.

2. A leather boot, laced from toe to calf, worn only after a loved one's passing. Its seductive arc was balanced, in this case, by the modesty of her chain and miniature.

3. She entered the room as the shades were drawn. The darkest lace bristling at her wrists.

4. "It was only then I wished to preserve my collection, its infinite variety. In each of the charms, a constellation. In every necklace a cluster of nervous stars."

5. *Persönlich.* Translated from the German as *subjective*. Suggesting the necessary progression from an object to its interpretation.

6. Only for a moment could she understand their fear of a spectacle. The red lacquer buttons gleaming from her shoes.

7. *Unsettle*.

1. The act of disturbing.

2. To cause uncertainty about.

†3. To agitate the mind or emotions of.

8. At that point the laces on her boots appeared disordered, chaotic. Yet those who observed the event seemed to fixate on the violet nightdress.

9. "I could no longer picture the heart-shaped box and its long golden chain. A rose garden held by the most delicate clasp."

10. In every locket, an empty frame where his face had been. And now the most garish flowers knotted in his hair.

11. *Crape*. A fabric worn in the first year. Used in such quantities that it became, for Courtaulds, an empire.

12. The unpublished novel depicts her attempt to abandon mourning dress altogether. While the manuscript was lost in a house fire, a white leather notebook can be found in the library's special collections.

13. An odd stillness as she wandered the unlit halls. The pearl earring glistening beside a lifeless clock.

14. A broken chain. Every primrose torn from the ground.

Palimpsest

Chapter One Within the house, an odd stillness. That was when she unlocked the door and began wandering the empty rooms. Her pearl earring still glistening beneath the nightstand.

*

Chapter One His appearance may be read as a culmination of several recurring motifs: a journey to the countryside, her descent into madness, and the jewelry box, with its silver nameplate and tiny golden key.

*

Chapter One A yellow moon adrift as the windows darken. And before long, she whispered, I'll have framed a portrait of him for each wall of the house. She seemed to understand the necessity of the velvet curtain. Its silk tassels and lavish golden trim.

*

Chapter One Always begin by saying that this is not "Romanticism." In the work of Keats especially, we rarely encounter a clear-cut example of artifice. Like the artist's mind decaying amidst the nightingales and constellations---this was assumed to be real. And the letter, with its intricate flourishes and belabored epigraph, gave rise to the most startling numbness in every fingertip.

*

Chapter One The portrait, like a letter, requires a subject. And only by considering the other, she thought, will I come to understand intention, its hazy yellow glow. Somewhere in the picture, a declaration. The door to the gallery groaning on its hinges.

*

Chapter One Again the delicate clasp on her pearl earring. Room after room of paintings in their tiny wooden frames. A series of odes in a strange language.

Kristina Marie Darling is the author of *Night Songs* (Gold Wake Press, 2010) and the editor of *narrative (dis)continuities: prose experiments by younger american writers* (VOX Press, 2011). She has been awarded fellowships and grants from the Vermont Studio Center, the Ragdale Foundation, and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts.

A Letter in Annie Hayworth's Red Mailbox

I used to imagine my adult life as Melanie's:
fox fur, green dress, flesh-colored heels
just posing around.
Alone in this room,
I'm growing old like you:
cynical in a white nightie.
I look out at brownstone couples
with their coffee cups, Bug-A-Boos.
There is nothing much to say to you
except I am sorry for such an unlucky lot
of all weeks for you to be in endless loop:
slowly turning the blindfolded girl,
watching Melanie stumble up
the sand dune with the man
who used to love you, your arms
going heavy as you conduct
"The Wee Copper O'Fife" over and over
for children who'd go on somewhere else
out of the hills of the bay.
In the TV glass, your hair windswept,
a Whitlock matte of sky,
into the frame
you rise. If I died,
I would like to be found
on the front steps, legs splayed,
next to a little garden,
a handsome man there
to cover me with his coat,
close my eyes with his palm.

Barbara Billingsley

I was the faceless Nanny
listening to the racket
of the Muppet Babies.
I stood at the mic,
recorded the voice: sorrow
contained out the kitchen window
on the blazing Technicolor lawn.
I lived in trivial roles:
Blonde with Hives
in *So You Think You're Allergic*.
Jive Lady. Saleswoman.
Customer in flowered hat.
Hat Check Girl.
Edna the Receptionist.
Dorothy the Secretary.
The Seamstress crossing the room
to hem Lana Turner's dress
in *The Bad & the Beautiful*.
Above my sternum
covered with pearls:
a surgical scar. I stood
in heels under the hot lights
with a cookie plate out.
Advising the homemaker
to dress up their role. Simply
the healer of Ward's bad moods.
Simply June in *The Human Duplicators*.
June Cleaver in *Still the Beaver*.

Jeffery Berg

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Jeffery Berg received an MFA from New York University. His work has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *Harpur Palate, Gloom Cupboard, Softblow, Hiram Poetry Review, Gay & Lesbian Review* and *Inertia Magazine*. He lives in New York and co-edits the online journal *Clementine*.

The Letter the Poet Wishes to Write of Justification for Creative Expression

Christina Murphy

To: (imagined editor) Jeffrey Thomas St. Vincent
of the (imagined) Journal of Ultra-Postmodern Poetic Expression

From: (the real but imagined poet) Christina Murphy

Dear Editor St. Vincent,

In response to your (real) call, I have submitted the (imagined) poem "Mind Under Matter" for your consideration. I believe this poem fits in well with the idiom of JPPE in its focus on postmodernism and on intransitive poetry. Let me explain.

Of course, terms like "postmodernism" and "intransitive" in relation to poetry as a creative art are subject to interpretation. "Postmodernism" I view as taking "modernism" one step further by critiquing the very act of self-consciousness or self-reflection and essentially turning introspection upon itself. The focus becomes an introspective look at—or more correctly, experience of—the emotional and philosophical insights that introspection as a poetic tool can yield. I am not talking about solipsism, though, as that makes consciousness its own object and device for poetic expression. Instead, I am speaking of an effort to use introspection as an exploration of what constitutes the transcendent autonomy of the authentic self and how can that self be manifested in language. This is a far different concern and methodology than the solipsism of lyrical Romanticism.

The concept of the "intransitive" is traditionally defined in grammar as language structures that do not contain or focus on an object. I see this concept of a non-focus on an object as a central component of postmodernism, and one I have strived for in my poem. Postmodernism embraces a mode of subjectivity that Sartre in The Psychology of the Imagination defines as a "shut imaginary consciousness, or a consciousness without the dimension of being-in-the-world." Thus, I have worked in my poem to create a poetic consciousness that embodies the transcendent "world-in-being" and that attempts to mediate that consciousness by rejecting traditional forms of narration. To me, a poem that is focusing in the dimension of "being-in-the-world" rather than exploring the world as an "object" is a poem in the "intransitive" mode. "Intransitive" poetry by this definition seems similar, to me, to what Hal Foster in "(Post) Modern Polemics" calls a "metafictional critique of representation" that both occupies and creates a "multidimensional space."

All of these senses of postmodern poetry and what it may be about seem a lot for a poet to attain, but they also represent a sensibility that I have been working in and exploring for a good while through a number of poems. So this is the point at which I say I think this poem solidly achieves a good measure of these concepts, and that, of course, I hope you enjoy the poem. The poem is imagined but real. I am real but imagined. And perhaps, like the poem, I too, am "postmodern." Whether I am also "intransitive" remains to be seen and might be the subject of another letter, is it not?

Sincerely (imagined),
Christina Murphy (real)

Christina Murphy lives and writes in a 100 year-old Arts and Crafts style house along the Ohio River. She continues to be amazed at how the Arts and Crafts movement--like painter Piet Mondrian--found such artistic integrity (and solace) in straight lines and simple (yet complex) forms. Her writing appears or is forthcoming in a number of journals including, most recently, *ABJECTIVE, A cappella Zoo, Splash of Red, LITnIMAGE, Corium Magazine, Blue Fifth Review, POOL: A Journal of Poetry,* and *Counterexample Poetics*. Her work has received an Editor's Choice Award and Special Mention for a Pushcart Prize.

Daryl Rogers

Born in Kentucky. Lived all over. Started writing poetry around the age of thirty. Most recently published in *Parting Gifts, Fuck!, Abbey* and *O&S*.



TEST PATTERN

Manic gibbons with cameras
shove mics under my nose,
drag me from my bed
and tell me I look like hell.
Then they refuse to let me make
myself a double vodka.

They show me a kitten
and throw it up above our heads.
It flies around the backyard,
paddling at the air with its paws,
bobbing and weaving
like an addled butterfly.

Much later, dawn on the wall,
a gaunt, white woman with a .22 auto
forces me to cook breakfast
and refuses, later, to let me sleep
and turns the ceiling light
on and off ... on and off.

After that I wake up and rise
to my hands and knees like a boat
righting itself, facing the wind.
The ensuing conversation is meaningless
and counter-productive.
My life begins again.

Fast Moving Storm,

red and yellow on the radar,
plows through an 88-degree day
that doesn't want to end,
like an army splitting an enemy.

I step outside barefoot,
on the patio wet with blowing rain
and the air is full of water
like in Dublin or Seattle.

Evergreens, a hundred yards away,
are gray and spectral dim.
Ferns, flowers, bushes and trees
move, excited by the wind.

Lightning runs down a stairway
and thunder crackles a half-beat later.
Lightning and rain and wind
rail against the coming night.

The grass is dark green.
My eight and a half foot fence
is lacquered with cool clear rain.
Orange Cosmos bloom like suns.

The earth turns black in stages,
as if I'm walking into a barn.
This warm rain tastes like the Gulf and
falls on me in rounds of applause.

KIRK CURNUTT

THE IDEOLOGICAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION

Part One

"You've got great legs."

Coming from anyone else, the compliment might have been flattering. Because, quite frankly, it's true: I do have great legs. They're the only part of my physique, I've come to accept, that can fairly be described as fetching. I inherited them from my mother's people, all of whom were constructed from solid Bavarian-Missouri farm stock. Yet given that this flattery came from my new boss and mentor —a man whose body heat was still moist in my palm from a squishy handshake—I was at something of a loss at how best to respond. After a half-dozen excruciating seconds of silence, the best I could muster was a startled, "Pardon me?"

"Great basketball legs," Dr. Ferber clarified, pointing to the naked kneecaps that dropped from beneath my khaki shorts. "You play?"

"Oh, sure. Of course."

It was a lie: I hadn't touched a basketball since a sixth-grade pickup game, back when we were too young to know they were called pickup games. My father made the freshman squad at his small college, and my uncle set several still-standing records at his Indiana high school before heading to the University of Miami to outshine some of Rick Barry's lesser stats, but that Bavarian stock of my mother's excused me from any need to be athletic. I'm not sure what impulse set me lying. Perhaps it was simply the desire to be excused from the gaze of a man thirty-five years my senior who was, without invitation, ogling me.

"We have a department game every fall," Dr. Ferber confided. "It's a landmark of the fall semester. Can I put you down to play? I can't guarantee you'll be on the starting team. We have a lot of closet jocks here at U-Mont."

"You mean I'd have to sit on the bench?"

I attempted to sound mildly offended.

"We usually manage to play every one. It's not the NCDoubleA, after all."

"Well, in that case, definitely"—though at that point I was trying to remember that NCAA didn't mean the National Association of Colored People. Dr. Ferber held his index finger over the crest of his chin. I knew that pose well. I'd read the man's most recent book, *Tradition and the Johnsonian Talent: Faith and Literature in an Age of Poststructural Heresy*, and the sight of him dabbing at his jaw as though his finger were a napkin reminded me of the author photo on the back jacket flap. I had mentioned Ferber's study in my application, and I was pretty sure that unsubtle bit of obsequy was responsible for the $16,000, tax-free fellowship I would be living off of until I could scribble the letters P, h, and D after my name. Ferber reached for my hand, and we shook once more. This time his grip felt a little tighter, a little more muscular. Perhaps I embroider, but as my knuckles came perilously close to popping, I pictured Herbert Ferber as the kind of middle-aged guy who celebrates each birthday with one more open button on the placket, who wears crotch-snuggling lycra bicycle pants while doing yard chores, and who, ultimately, takes a student from his sophomore-lit survey to the altar. The image couldn't help but seem a little incongruous compared to the old-guard ideology of a former Jesuit who began his apologia for hermeneutics with the sentence "Derrida is the Balaam of our age."

My brief but odd conversation with Dr. Ferber, two decades to the wind now, marked the first day of what was supposed to be a long haul toward a career in academia. It also marked the last day I ever wore shorts to school. Despite the fact that the next few weeks were swathed in ninety-percent humidity and other graduate students lounged in retro Bermudas and oversized Ts, I felt conspicuous, especially after a fellow student called Dennis Anglock began affectionately referring to me as "Gams." Then one day in my required Introduction to Postmodern Literature course (subtitled "The Novel as a NonGenre"), the professor stopped me dead in the door with another unsolicited posey.

"I keep hearing about your legs."

"Apparently they precede me."

Dr. Etherwise was a good deal chunkier than Ferber. He was actually closer to my own age than Ferber's, but evidently since he'd already married his sophomore, he no longer felt the need to tidy up after the crumblings of senescence.

"Dr. Ferber, I take it?"

Etherwise smiled. "He's got three fetishes: strong legs, good basketball, and inviolable belief. Unfortunately, he's only managed to maintain the last one."

I put my books down on the table as he finished packing his briefcase.

"Someone told me he played in college."

"A long time ago. Back when they used buckets instead of nets."

"You played?"

I hadn't meant it sarcastically, but something about English departments makes every utterance sound sarcastic. Etherwise's eyebrows shot over the thin frames of his glasses until his forehead wrinkled. That's the other preferred pose of academics: the cocky, contemptuous look. I knew that one, too. I'd flipped through Etherwise's book, *X Marx the Spot: Displaced Signifiers in British Proletariat Fiction, 1850-1914*, paying more attention to his picture than his cogitating.

"I played in high school," he finally said with a twitch.

"Me too," I lied. "But it's been a long time."

"Ferber didn't happen to say what team you'd be on, did he?"

"He said the bench, actually."

Etherwise chuckled a little. Evidently, he didn't pick up too many splinters.

"And what subject did you say you were thinking of for your Master's thesis?"

"I didn't—not yet. But maybe something about Eliot, Yeats and prophecy.… I'm not positive. I just started here."

"Oh, you'll be on Ferber's team all right." He nodded in a way that I can only describe as sarcastic. "A topic like that, he'll want you on his side."

I didn't understand the insinuation, but Etherwise evidently needed to get to his Volvo to bring on the revolution, so I didn't ask. A few days passed and I began to think I'd actually been excused from service. Then, one morning as I fed quarters into a soda machine, Ferber tapped me on the shoulder.

"I want you by my side," he said.

It sounded more like a romantic proposal than a draft.

"We'll practice Tuesday nights at the faculty gym. You're free Tuesday nights, aren't you?"

"Except for studying," I smiled.

"We'll see you Tuesday then. What position do you play? Guard?"

I caught myself before I could blurt "tackle." I knew the center was normally the team gargantuan. I also knew that the two who looked only a little less like thyroid cases were called forwards. At five ten, I was a dwarf compared to Ferber, so I told him I played guard, and I threw out the modifier "inside" to sound convincing. Ferber curled his lips, apparently impressed, and trotted back to his office.

The afternoon before I was to report up for training camp I had coffee with a trio of fellow grad students, Anglock among them. For whatever reason, I figured Dennis would have better things to do than gird up a jock, so I didn't say anything about Ferber or my legs. He brought the subject up.

"Max Etherwise says you're playing for Ferber's team."

"Goddamn—word gets around here fast, huh?"

"They aren't really going through with that again, are they?"

One of the two women we sat with asked this. Her name was Donna. Anglock caught her in midsip, so her disdain was voiced through the curling steam of the dark coffee whose heat flushed us all. Before I could confess I had indeed been recruited, Donna set her cup on its saucer and shook her head so her big, circular earrings chimed at her neck.

"You know, he actually wanted some of the girls—he calls us girls; even Glenda McNeary who's forty-seven and is big enough to make Ferber eat his esophagus is a girl—he wanted us to cheer at last year's game. Do you believe that? He wanted us to be cheerleaders."

I didn't know what to say to this, so I turned back to Anglock. "You're on the other side, I take it."

He nodded. "Etherwise's side."

"There are only two teams in the IBA," the other woman informed me. Her name was Ame, and when she spoke her lips pushed out like a duck's bill.

"The IBA?"

"The Ideological Basketball Association."

"The troglodytes versus the erudites," Donna explained.

"They really call it the IBA?"

"We call it that," Anglock smirked. "We grad students, I mean. It's how the politics get worked out every fall. All the troglodytes who can't stomach postmodernism demolish all the theorists who can't take classicism."

"It's a man thing," Donna insisted, earrings still jingling.

"A grown-man thing," Ame elaborated.

I had trouble believing a single intramural game was taken so seriously, so I asked. My new friends were amazed that I didn't think the difference between a troglodyte and an erudite a serious matter.

"I hope he doesn't read off that stupid dedication again," Donna moaned.

Before I could ask what dedication, Ame went, "You mean you're going?" and Donna, offended at being accused of having interest in such a vacuous display as a grown man thing, fumbled for a face-saver. When she couldn't find it, she sputtered out the sad truth that, yes, although everybody thought this basketball game was silly, immature and downright indicative of masculinity, there wasn't anything else going on that night, and besides, the whole English department would be there. Finally, I got to ask my question.

"Before the game starts," Anglock explained, "Ferber reads off this dedication. The whole night gets dedicated to this old college friend of his. I think the guy died. What's the guy's name?"

Donna shrugged; Ame did the same.

"Something old," one said.

"Something Jewish," the other added.

"Rothchild," Anglock remembered. "Arnie Rothchild. I don't know how I could forget. I've heard that dedication for four years now. You know, it'd be funny to see a picture of Ferber back then. I can't imagine him with a crew cut."

"I can't imagine him with hair," Donna sniffed.

"He always says, 'In memory of Arnie Rothchild, 1929-1953.' And then he whips off some hokum about playing the game as though it were an art. Honesty, too—he throws in some bullshit about Rothchild being honest."

"What's Rothchild to Ferber?" I asked.

Everyone at the table shrugged.

"I guess they were friends," Anglock answered indifferently.

"Yeah, but what's so important about this Rothchild?"

Anglock shrugged once more, shrugs being as pluripresent in grad school as sarcasm.

"I guess the dude died. I mean, really, who gives a fuck?"

II.

My fellow troglodytes were such a motley, saggy bunch that I only needed to peek into the faculty gym to realize why Ferber saw such hope in my humble legs. I arrived at practice that same night to find a gaggle of seven of our department's senior-but-still-ambulatory set tossing free throws as though they played handling hot potatoes. Besides me, there was only one other graduate student. If he wasn't a troglodyte in chronological terms, he was trying hard to be a political one: He kept asking me if I was interested in joining the Young Catholic Right, and after the third time that I hesitated when he asked if I knew how many abortions had been performed in the U.S. in 1988, he smugly spouted a figure: "1.6 million." I probably could've shut him up if I'd confessed that I was culpable for one of them, and that the ensuing sorrow is what had caused me to quit a cub reporter job at *The Anniston Star* to disappear into the anonymity of a doctoral program.

Our two forwards were Drs. Heinz and Salsman. A Dr. Blessum played guard. So did Hailey, the other graduate student. Ferber would switch between forward and center. Our regular center could probably go into the Guinness Book as the tallest academician in America: at 6'11" he was dizzyingly tall, and yet the slouch in his posture and the dotty way he ran made his height seem more oafish than awesome. (I'd been warned about this Dr. Oxman earlier at coffee hour. He was famous for circulating a memo every October advertising a forthcoming monograph, *Surfeited with Shit: Swift and Scatatology*, to be published by Fecal Press. "He's anal expulsive but he wishes he were anal retentive," Donna had assured me. Right then I knew she'd been in grad school too long).

So that was our lineup: Ferber and Heinz were to start, with Salsman coming in for Heinz when ever Heinz started huffing too loud. Oxman was a young man, so he could play the entire game. Blessum and Hailey didn't look like Olympians, but I figured they, too, could survive an hour of trotting. That left me, and the way I sized it up as I took a couple of lame tosses from the free-throw line, I'd be sitting on the bench.

"This year we have a surprise," Ferber said after another ten minutes of warmingup. "For the last three years Etherwise has analyzed what he assumes will be our game. He's deconstructed us, and that puts us on the defensive. Gentlemen, let's face it. The game is no longer the game it was when the great Nat Holman could win one simply by forcing the opposition to come after the ball. We have to go on the offensive. We have to press the real advantage we have: We know that basketball is an art, and we believe in it as an art."

Nobody seemed too stirred by this oratory. Oxman was tying his shoelaces in big, floppy loops. Hailey sat on the floor with his knees at his chin. The rest just stared dimly at our coach and encourager, and I couldn't help but wonder if they didn't, as I did, feel just the least bit silly and out of his element.

After practice I caught Hailey heading to the bicycle racks where a shiny, enviable ten-speed awaited.

"You know who Nat Holman is?"

"Nope."

"The guy Ferber was talking about. I thought maybe you knew."

"To be honest I wasn't really listening."

"Do you know why Ferber left the Jesuits?"

This cheered Hailey's face. "Maybe he learned that at a university you can believe in something without doing a goddamn thing about it."

It wasn't the response I expected, so I just whispered a noncommittal "indeed" and left him to his ten-speed. Then I walked home, in the dark and alone. If I remember correctly, it was the first night since my arrival on campus that wasn't oppressively hot. It should have been one of those lovers' nights where two people can stroll around and feel the energy of attraction. I started thinking of a woman from 1988, however, trying to keep a picture of her in my mind instead of allowing her to dissolve into a statistic. For a second or two I was tempted to go back into the gym and find a public phone. I decided not to call her, though, when it hit me how little she would want to hear from me. Instead, I headed to the shitty little studio apartment I rented for $100 a month, and drank four beers.

Thanks to them, I dreamed of Hailey all the way to two a.m., after which I was stranded in insomnia.

The next day I did something strange. I was at the library, trying to gather some secondary sources for a paper I was planning to call "Tis a Pity She's a Metaphor: Fallacies of Characterization." I had no idea what it was about, but the title sounded like a good start. I had compiled a bibliography from the library's computerized card-catalogue system when, on a whim, I typed a name into subject line on the screen: ROTHCHILD, ARNOLD. The computer had never heard of him.

I tried another: HOLMAN, NAT. Again, nothing.

On my third whim, I entered a name I was knew would get a response: FERBER, HERBERT. Sure enough, several titles flashed forth. Most were your average academic fare, books written for raises, tenure, recognition. There was Ferber's recent incendiary challenge to the poststructuralists, a collection of edited essays on

Mary McCarthy, and even something called *UrTexts and Pretexts: Legends of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost*, which, as a young man then quite romantic about titles, I had to admire. Down near the bottom was an oddity, if not a great name, some clever alliteration: *Confessions of the Lost Cloth*. I punched up the call number and, flushed with mystery, ran off to the fourth floor to corner the true Ferber.

As it turned out, *Confessions of the Lost Cloth* was a skimpy paperback novel published, the date on the title page told me, in 1963. That would have made Ferber thirty-two or thirty-three, I guessed. I turned to the back book cover. There was no picture. That surprised me, but I didn't think a whole lot about it. Instead, I read the flap copy:

In a story every bit as bold and brash as the times in which we live, Herbert Ferber tells the journey of a young man's lost faith and his attempt to recoup it through a Dantesque journey set in the hellishness of contemporary America.

It made the story sound absolutely horrible, but I decided to check the book out anyway and passed my afternoon—the one I was supposed to spend making up something about metaphors and characters—reading. Truth be told, *Confessions of the Lost Cloth* was every bit as lousy as its jacket promised. I was expecting the Ferber who, in a blink, would refer to deconstruction as deconstruing, the Ferber who liked to, according to rumor, called Etherwise Neitherwise. Instead, I was waist deep in prose so turgid that the phrase "turgid prose" actually appeared in a paragraph—and not sarcastically, either.

At one point I was so bored I flipped to the end paper to see how many times the novel had been checked out in the twenty-seven years since its publication. What I saw was a sad sight I can't imagine any author wants to glimpse: the book had apparently not left the library between 1965 and 1990. Only a bit more surprising was the fact that the recent due date was just a few weeks before my arrival at the university. I tried to think who in hell might be interested in such an obscurity when I realized, flipping back to where I'd stopped reading, someone had annotated the text. Not commentary mind you, but little check marks every so often in the margins. They started about a third of the way through the story, but I couldn't figure out their logic. I've got a system for my annotating: anything I think I can steal, I underline. But my predecessor left no trace of a unifying theme, no common motif. Curious, I scanned Ferber's novel all the way to the conclusion.

Probably because I was scanning, I didn't understand the ending. The novel's last words were in Latin: *Frater, noli scrupulare. Nemo dat quod non habet*.

On a good day I could have told you "frater" reminded me of fraternity and scrupulare sounded like "scruple," but all I could see was "Nemo," and I was thinking of Jules Verne and James Mason. Flustered, I tucked *Confessions of the Lost Cloth* in my backpack, and tried to remember what was most important in life:

I still had a seminar paper to write.

(To Be Continued in the next issue...)

Kirk Curnutt is the author of two novels, *Breathing Out the Ghost* (2008) and *Dixie Noir* (2009). You can find him if you want him at www.kirkcurnutt.com.

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Magdalawit Makonnen

For E. C.

It's good we've hidden it under layers of snow.
Uniform stars, formed and flanked, think distances—
that is, years in form.

Where do I begin? At a distance,
at a year's pace where beauty considers her angles.
He and I never learn. Our names drift.

Into the Windowless Air

In order to make my awareness round
with a fine point somewhere in it
I proposed to remain vigilant
and make use of available resources.
To pause and think about
what it means to relate
(to the next person);
and how degrees and levels of attachment
produce movement that one could label
“music,” or “dissonant music”.

Yet, the night is the comfort of choices, which
with an absent-minded concession
its body lends.

Magdalawit Makonnen is a writer residing in Los Angeles. She received her English BA from UCLA with a focus in Creative Writing, and is a current MFA student of Antioch University Los Angeles' Creative Writing program. Her poems have appeared in *The Bijou Poetry Review, The Talon Magazine, Barnwood Magazine, Volt, Westwind Journal,* and *Zaum*. In addition to writing, Magdalawit enjoys painting and drawing.

pain is not sorrow, I'll outlive the flowers



I promise, I will not make a mess with a 45,
powder burn the forehead that pushed through you, mama
almost easy, slippery with a red summer dawn
I was not the amazing one, the tearing first born son,

just a little girl, slipped out of a little girl, that's us.

Mama, hey, I'll make you famous, too shy, sweet
your paint hanging in bank lobbies in Oklahoma
Carl Albert in profile, the naked lady over the bar
in the hotel in a 6 story brick downtown, somewhere.

I can't find it anymore, that umber under her breast.

Sometimes, I knew you walked outside after dark
sat in the truck under the tree, waiting for road noises
listening for anything to drown the cicadas out
waiting for directions from God, waiting for the man

I know you loved him, that's enough, it was.

I never took it as gospel, that it aches, that it should
that blood was an integral thing, burns and bruises
It's just you were more patient, had seen more things
had mapped his pain and drawn it out, traced it

with your kisses, forgave him, even before it was done.

I never let a man do that to me, mama, never could be
that strong, like Jesus, let it rain on me, hot, hot rain
hands and tears and vomit, all the death he had seen
all the waste and viscera , the broken crying boy he was.

I guess there are all kinds of cures, bitter, tough.

You never taught me how to hate, I tried though,
some things I have no talent for. Some I do, I do
and can, ignore pain, laugh boisterously like a boy
paint like you, write like I dance, delicate, tipsy,

promise things, carte blanche, live longer than you.

Not one more wreath on your front door, mama girl,
no bouquets to rot pretty hanging on a nail on the wall,
no slow dusty cars and uneaten red velvet cake,
nothing of me to hang over you in a pall, no torn dresses.

Coleen Shin lives in Texas where she devotes an inordinate amount of time trying to grow tomatoes, mostly unsuccessfully. A writer and artist, she believes to capture their colors in paint and verse might soothe the sting of her horticultural failures. Devoted to her family and especially her mother, a significant amount of her work addresses emotional and familial bonds. Ms Shin's work can be found in many fine poetic journals that have by their generosity given her works a loving home.

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For Amy

Industrious baby birds
whistling as they work
crafting nests in neighboring shrubs
crafted nests in neighbor's shrubs

Sudden violence descends
a disapproving wind
striking legs and clipping wings
Amy and I know why

The caged bird sings

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Amanda Gentry wakes up in the morning, brews a pot of coffee, prepares a bowl of yogurt and fruit; she takes these out to her deck where she sits with her containers, Flower and companion, Scooby Doo. Sip, sip, chew, chew; her soul stirs and out come words. She falls at their feet and submits.

Karina Borowicz

My Salt

I started keeping salt in a shaker like a pet
setting it free every now and then by
unscrewing the lid, I'd sit and watch
thinking how my salt loves me
it never wants to leave and never wants
to be shaken out, my salt was faithful
through the bitterest times, shining
its white purity, dust of the Milky Way
curled up and snoring sweetly in a little bottle
fitted to the palm of my hand

Iggy Pop on *The Dinah Shore Show*

And then there's shirtless Iggy
who went over the cliff and put his scars on display
but he looked out from under his long black bangs
like a little boy, nervous when he had to talk to Dinah
and as he confessed that the incident with the broken
glass tearing up his chest was a penance
for some bad thing he'd done the night before
he looked down through the smoked glass coffee table
and you could tell he was sinning
all over again

The Horse's Neck

I used to fly a plane around the dented
tin globe, I was a paper pilot
fragile over the churning Atlantic
that was me drawing chalk lines across the sky
sadly and slowly at first, in the knowledge there were
sharks waiting to take my limbs off, then I'd make
wild scribbles till my shoulder ached
back then I was always escaping the jaws
of death at the last minute, I never forgot
to put a flourish on it, give it a little English
like the time I was swimming and the undertow dragged me
to open sea, I struggled against the huge soft body
of the water, the minions of seaweed,
everything went gray and flat around me
as if the world had collapsed into an old photograph
and when I was far away from the horse's neck of land
I somehow leapt free of the pull like Jonah spit in a bright
arc from the whale's lips, I flapped silver in the sun
and backstroked home to the blessed sand, I will never
ever leave you again, my red pebbles, my beached quahogs
my salt of the earth, my blacktop parking lot

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Karina Borowicz has recent work in *AGNI Online*, *New Ohio Review*, and *Rattle*. Her translations have appeared on *Poetry Daily*. She lives in Western Massachusetts.

Michael Broek

Still Life

The cutting board was no field of clover
and I was no butcher
but there we were, the rabbit

lying there quiet, alone. Outside, the grass
was dry. Dust stuck to the windows, and above
the kitchen sink I could see a gray dove

begin its strut and coo, seeing another of its kind.
When I ran a finger from the back end
toward the head, the fur parted,

as if I had traced a stream in the earth,
though the effect retreated, the fur forgetting.
The bones in its back resembled accordion

keys, its lungs, the billows, and I thought the last time
I felt your skin, the bones across your back
seemed to sigh.

Now, as the work begins, the dove flutters against
the window, a white collar around its neck, and I
imagine its cocked head is symbolic

suggesting we had loved, it meant, and the bird noticed.
Of course this is wrong. Of course everything
is wrong, except the wound where I stuff

the bread, the apples, and sew.

Michael Broek's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *The American Poetry Review, Literary Imagination, The George Washington Review, Parthenon West, The Cimarron Review, The Sycamore Review, The Clackamas Review, Sundog, Slipstream, 42opus, The Paterson Literary Review, Fourteen Hills*, and elsewhere in print and online. He is the recipient of a Poetry Fellowship from the NJ State Council on the Arts, the Carol Houck Contributor Scholarship to the Bread Loaf Writers Conference, and he holds an MFA from Goddard College and a PhD in Literature from the University of Essex (UK).

Maria Miranda Maloney

Maria Miranda Maloney is a publisher, poet, and teacher from El Paso, Texas. She is the founder of Mouthfeel Press, an independent press. Ms. Maloney has promoted and organized community, literary programs featuring authors, musicians and artists of the borderlands, as well as from other parts of the United States and Latin America. Her work has been featured in *BorderSenses*; *Xispas: The Journal of Latino Art, Writing, and Politics; Mezcla: Art & Writing from the Tumblewords Project;* the National Catholic Register. She has been a featured reader at Beyond Baroque in Venice, California. She is a contributing writer and poet for the Latino Smithsonian Virtual Museum in Washington D.C.

Belonging

belonging pops in
every other day, says hello
and leaves

when she's
swinging from tree limbs, it's there
belonging waiting eagerly
to join the tick anticipation
that never comes
her way On her bony knees,
in her sweaty armpits
and sticky skin, it's there
tangled in her tongue
like ruddy tamarind, brushing
against her dress, belonging
here or there

If

if and if I'm bees and where if
I was migration
or the eaten palm thinning
or if I was the falling changes
as changes as beaten to the
or even worse
if I'm me in ways
nothing but me more than thinning
but way ahead, or away or the hands
open to remains
to the cornea (a word inserted arbitrarily)
ready even with you to
the many words
and if I'm nectar and
if I'm winged or fall or
I am steady too, to
thoughts. Will I hear
you follow your violet
or hear not the unchanged
but the before me
shrinking the you

Floating

Jeff Friedman

On the hottest day of the summer, while he was feeling a little light-headed probably because of his swollen sinuses, while his wife waited for him to help her unroll a new Persian rug to try out in the living room, while his daughter was texting one of her boyfriends about a concert out on the green, Joe Lewinske rose toward the ceiling. Surprised at first, he kicked and clawed the air, but that did nothing to get him back on the ground, and then he began to enjoy the sensation of floating, even though it was a little hotter up near the peak of the cathedral ceiling. “That can’t be good for your heart,” his wife said. His daughter shut her cell phone and looked up at him. “Awesome, Dad can fly.

“Come down,” his wife said. “I need you to help me with the furniture.” “Come down,” his daughter said. “I want a ride.” But Joe felt the air pressure under him and didn’t actually know how to get down. He exhaled fully, attempting to make his body as heavy as possible. He came down perhaps two inches, but as soon as he breathed, he was touching the ceiling again. “How about some help,” Joe asked. “Do something: Throw me a rope, or get a step ladder and bring me back to earth.”

His daughter left the room and came back with a video camera. “We can make some money off this,” she said aiming it at him. His wife approved. “Why not reality TV?” “Our father who art in heaven,” the daughter said. Joe watched his wife unroll the rug, lifting the legs of the couch, table and chairs. He felt drowsy and didn’t know if he could keep his eyes open, so he pressed his back against the ceiling, spreading his arms out as if the ceiling were the floor. Before too long, he dozed off momentarily.

When he opened his eyes again, his daughter was still shooting video footage. “He’s like a big Jim Henson puppet,” she said. “He’s more like one of the three bears,” his wife responded. “He’s like an angel without wings,” his daughter said. “More like a pudgy cloud,” his wife answered. “No, like a pink dirigible,” his daughter countered. “He’s like a million dandelions gone to seed,” his wife said. “He’s like a rubber duck," his daughter said, "a cartoon bunny, a feathery pillow—" “Like a sheet that the wind catches,” his wife interrupted. "Like a downy pile of leaves that flies up on the wind," his daughter added. “Like sparks from a bonfire shooting into space,” his wife replied and opened the screen door to let in some air. “That’s better.”

When Joe began to float around the living room, his wife and daughter turned in circles below, his daughter still filming. “Do something,” his wife said, before he makes another mess.” She handed her mother the video camera. Retrieving a broom, his daughter tickled his belly with it as she guided him over the partition through the kitchen and hall and back around into the living room while his wife kept the camera on him, holding it in one hand and opening the deck door with the other. He could see where his daughter was steering him. He veered away from the wall, ducked the chandelier and rowed his arms desperately to avoid floating out the open door into the ravine, but soon it was obvious, he was headed toward yet one more catastrophe.

Jeff Friedman’s fifth collection of poetry, *Working in Flour,* will be published by Carnegie Mellon University Press in early 2011. His poems, mini stories, and translations have appeared in many literary magazines, including *American Poetry Review*, *Poetry, 5 AM, Margie, Agni Online, Poetry International, Prairie Schooner, Antioch Review, Quick Fiction, Nighttrain,* and *The New Republic.* A contributing editor to *Natural Bridge*, he teaches at Keene State College in New Hampshire. His book of translations, *Two Gardens*: *Modern Hebrew Poems of the Bible*, has been accepted for publication by Wolfson Press.



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